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# The Date of the Exodus

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ARTICLE VII.

THE DATE OF THE EXODUS.

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THERE has been much discussion of the date of the Exodus in recent years. A careful reëxamination of the sources has led me to believe that we can now determine it with a very great approximation to accuracy. This is due to the excavation of Pithom and Raamses, the finding of the Israel stele, and the recovery of the original order of certain portions of the text of Numbers. When the narrative of the Pentateuch is studied carefully in the light of a critical examination of the facts that these discoveries have placed at our disposal, we can ascertain not merely in what reign the Exodus occurred, but also in what year of the reign, and follow the course of events season by season from the death of the Pharaoh of the oppression to the departure from Kadesh-barnea. The exact year of the accession of the Pharaoh of the Exodus has, however, not yet been determined with precision, but the limits of doubt appear to have been reduced by the Egyptologists to the space of a very few years.

As many theories have been advanced, it will be necessary to give some consideration to them; but this can be done best when we have studied the facts, and I accordingly begin with these.

In Ex. i. 11 we read of the children of Israel: "And they built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses." The

excavator of Pithom, Professor Naville, gives us the following clear and definite information:—

“The founder of the city, the king who gave to Pithom the extent and the importance we recognize, is certainly Rameses II. I did not find anything more ancient than his monuments. It is possible that before his time there may have been a shrine consecrated to the worship of Tum, but it is he who built the enclosure and the storehouses” (E. Naville, *The Store-city of Pithom and the Route of the Exodus*, 2d ed. [1885], p. 11).

The identification appears to be beyond doubt, and so we have firm ground under our feet. Pithom was built under Rameses II.

So was Raamses. Its excavator, Professor Petrie, writes as follows:—

“The city of Rameses, now Tell Rotāb, is about twelve miles along the narrow marshy valley; and Pithom, now Tell-el-Maskhuta, is about ten [*sic* H. M. W.] miles further east. The city of Rameses is identified by remains of a town and temple built by Rameses II. . . . There is no other city of this date along the valley, except Pithom. An official here was ‘over the foreigners of Thuku’ or Succoth, the general name of this land which was occupied with Bedawy ‘booths’ or *succoth*; he probably was the superintendent of the Israelites” (W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Egypt and Israel*, 1911, pp. 33 f.).

“To the XIXth dynasty belongs the temple of Ramessu II. at Tell er Retabeh. This site thus occupied by him is now seen to fulfil in every way the accounts of the city of Raamses” (Petrie, *Hyksos and Israelite Cities*, 1906, p. 2).

“The stone vases of the old kingdom, and the weights and scarabs of the IXth to the XIIth dynasties prove the early date of occupation. The human sacrifice under the oldest wall points to its being held by Syrians rather than Egyptians. The depth of about twelve to fifteen feet of ruins beneath the buildings of the XVIIIth and XIXth dynasties is solid evidence of the early importance of the town. Of later age we found here a temple of Ramessu II. with sculptures in red granite and limestone; part of a tomb of an official who was over the store-houses of Syrian produce; and the great works of Ramessu III. All of these discoveries exactly accord with the requirements of the city of Raamses . . . where a store-city was built by the Israelites along with that



of Pithom, which is only eight [*sic* H. M. W.] miles distant. The absence of any other Egyptian site suitable to these conditions, which are all fulfilled here, makes it practically certain that this was the city of Raamses named in Exodus" (*op. cit.*, p. 28).

Pithom and Raamses, then, were built under Rameses II. His reign lasted sixty-six or (probably) sixty-seven years.

At this point it is right to lay stress on the fact that we have irrefragable historical testimony on both sides. The excavation of Pithom shows that its foundation cannot be duplicated. It was built under Rameses II. and in no other reign. The building of *both* Pithom and Raamses as *store cities in one and the same reign* is of course still more impossible to duplicate. On the other hand, no nation ever invented a narrative that it had been enslaved in the territory of another nation and compelled to build certain cities specifically mentioned by name. We are here on the firmest of historical ground.

There are two other slighter but still remarkable agreements. We read of "the land of Rameses" in the time of Joseph (Gen. xlvii. 11). The phrase is the expression of the narrator, not of Joseph. But Petrie's discovery makes it clear that the city which at the time of the Exodus was called Raamses had an earlier importance in another age. This exactly fits with its position in the time of Joseph.

The other agreement is provided by the correspondence between the length of the reign of Rameses II. and the phrase in Ex. ii. 23, "And it came to pass in the course of those many days, that the king of Egypt died." That could be used only of a Pharaoh who had a long reign.

Later on we shall be able to discover other agreements with the 430 years of Ex. xii. 40 and the fourth generation of Gen. xv. For the present we must pass over these mat-

ters and the intervening period, and proceed to the consideration of the Israel stele.

The following is the translation of its material portion given by J. H. Breasted (Ancient Records, vol. iii. pp. 263 f.) :—

“The kings are overthrown, saying: ‘Salâm!’  
Not one holds up his head among the Nine Bows.  
Wasted is Tehenu,  
Kheta is pacified,  
Plundered is Pekanan [lit., “*the Canaan*”], with every evil,  
Carried off is Askalon,  
Seized upon is Gezer,  
Yenoam is made as a thing not existing.  
Israel is desolated, his seed is not;  
Palestine has become a widow for Egypt.  
All lands are united, they are pacified;  
Everyone that is turbulent is bound by King Merneptah, given  
life like Re, every day.”

Merneptah was the immediate successor of Rameses II., the Pharaoh of the oppression.

Of the places mentioned, Tehenu is Libya, to the west of Egypt, but Kheta means Hittite-land, Askalon and Gezer are in the south of Palestine, and Yenoam has been identified with *Yanuh*, near Tyre, thought to be the Yanoah of 2 Kings xv. 29 (Petrie, History of Egypt, vol. iii. p. 12). The same authority identifies Pekanan as *a place two miles southwest of Hebron (loc. cit.)*. It is not clear how a place so far north as Yanuh would come into the list *at this point, if the order is geographical*,<sup>1</sup> and it may be conjectured that the name Yenoam here refers to the Yanim or Yanum of Josh. xv. 53. Hittite-land would be further north, but in the Karnak inscription Merneptah speaks of having permitted the export of “grain in ships, to keep alive that land of Kheta”

<sup>1</sup> The order may of course be due to literary or chronological considerations, or to chance, or to the relative importance of the places named.

(Breasted, *Ancient Records*, vol. iii. p. 244). Not much, therefore, can be gathered from the statement as to their being "pacified" or "quieted" (Petrie). Indeed, Brugsch (*History*, 2d ed., vol. ii. p. 130; cp. Breasted, *History of Egypt*, 2d ed. [1909], p. 465) says that his relations with them "were of the most friendly nature, in consequence of the old treaty of peace." War can scarcely be inferred from "the Hittite land is pacified" (perhaps with gifts of grain)—not, be it observed, conquered or defeated. Ranke translates "Cheta in Frieden" "at peace"; and if this is right it gives absolutely no ground for assuming an otherwise unknown campaign contradicting the known relations between the Pharaoh and the Hittites at that period (*Altorientalische Texte und Bilder*, vol. i. p. 195). However, the question of a Hittite campaign does not affect our investigation.

Petrie gives a translation of the Israel stele that does not differ substantially from Breasted's (*History of Egypt*, vol. iii. p. 114). There is a material difference in Ranke's rendering of the Israel phrase: "Israel—seine Leute sind wenig, sein Same existiert nicht mehr" (*op. cit.*, vol. i. p. 195). "Israel—*its people are few*, its seed no longer exists."

With regard to the meaning of the inscription, Breasted has some important remarks:—

"The assertion of the defeat of Israel is so brief and bald that little can be drawn from it. Moreover it is made up of conventional phrases, applied also to other peoples. Much has been made of the second phrase, '*his seed is not*.' It has been applied to the seed of Israel and referred to the slaying of the male children of the Israelites by the Egyptians! But this phrase is found five times elsewhere in the inscriptions referring to a number of other peoples as follows:—

"1. '*Those who reached my border are desolated, their seed is not*' (referring to northern invaders).

"2. '*The Libyans and the Seped are wasted, their seed is not*.'



"3. 'The fire has penetrated us, our seed is not' (words of defeated Libyans).

"4. 'Their cities are made ashes, wasted, desolated; their seed is not' (referring to the Meshwesh).

"5. 'Gored<sup>1</sup> is the chief of Amor<sup>1</sup> . . . his seed is not.'

"The words, 'his (their, our) seed is not,' are, therefore, a conventional phrase applicable to any defeated and plundered people, and cannot possibly designate an incident peculiar to the history of Israel, like the slaying of the male children (!). Israel, clearly located among Palestinian peoples by the inscription, was defeated and plundered" (Ancient Records, vol. iii. pp. 257 f.).

This is very clear indeed. The only question is whether Breasted's is not, if anything, an understatement. It seems reasonably plain that in the case of the Northern invaders of the first citation the plundering, if any, cannot even refer to their crops — which, presumably, did not join in the invasion. The expression would seem to be purely conventional, meaning nothing more than 'crushingly defeated.'

There is a further point on the language of this line, which, however, is not brought out by Breasted. I cite the comments of B. D. Eerdmans: "The determinative sign for land which is used of Tehenu (Libya), the Hittites, Askalon, Gezer, and Yenoam, is lacking in the case of Israel. This shows that at that period Israel did not constitute a political unit and is consequently to be regarded within Palestine as a foreign population" (Die Vorgeschichte Israels, 1908, p. 55). I should rather infer that it did not constitute a *territorial* unit, and I think that this is strongly emphasized by the case of the Hittites. They have the sign and are consequently Hittite-land: Israel, on the other hand, is a people, *not* Israel-land. Palestine has not yet become the land of Israel either in whole or in part. *Note how this is confirmed by the mention of Pekanan, near Hebron, which is not yet Israelitish territory.*

Breasted also explains the phrase about Palestine's becom-

<sup>1</sup> Uncertain.

ing a widow for Egypt. Quoting a parallel passage, where Rameses II. is called a "husband," i.e. protector, "of Egypt," he adds: "Hence a land may be widowed (=without a 'husband,' =without a protector), and Palestine had no protector against Egypt" (Ancient Records, vol. iii. p. 264, note). Ranke (*op. cit.*, vol. i. p. 195) explains that there is a wordplay between *chare* widow and *charu* Syria. This obviously accounts for the choice of phrase.

It will be observed that *nothing in the inscription warrants the statement that Merneptah defeated Israel. Credit is taken for a defeat of Israel* (not later than a given date in his fifth year), *whether inflicted by his people (with or without his personal presence) or his allies or his vassals is not stated.* That defeat was inflicted on a *non-territorial* Israel, and it was inflicted *in or near Palestine*. As a result of this and the other facts mentioned, Palestine is without protection against Egypt, and "all lands are united, they are pacified." That is to say, there is a *pax Ægyptia* in Palestine, and the attempts to disturb it by Israel and others have been crushingly defeated.

The above appears to me to represent as accurately as possible the contents, the whole contents, and nothing but the contents of the material portion of the inscription. It is necessary to lay stress on this because inferences are sometimes drawn which go beyond the actual language of our text. Breasted (pp. 258 f.) argues for a personal campaign by Merneptah: "This inscription is not the only evidence of a campaign by him in Palestine." I do not think it is necessarily evidence either that all the events mentioned occurred during the course of a single campaign or that the Pharaoh was himself present in all or any of the cases. Would an inscription of our own time mentioning the campaigns in

Flanders, Turkey, and Africa necessarily imply the personal presence of the King? This inscription no more proves that the Pharaoh was present at the defeat of Israel than the song of Moses in Ex. xv. testifies to his having been drowned in the Red Sea.

Breasted, however, refers to other evidence, and his view here must be carefully considered for chronological reasons. He says definitely that "Merneptah was in Asia in his third year, as the journal of a border commandant shows" (p. 258), and repeats this statement on page 271, where he sets out the journal. The references, however, may or may not support the conclusion he draws from them.

The journal omits all prepositions, and as W. Max Müller (*Asien und Europa*, p. 270) supplies 'from' in one passage where others supply 'to,' the probative value is perhaps not very great. One wonders whether the process could not be extended. Reading the entries in English, I was struck by a variation of phrase between "there went up" and "there returned," and it seemed to me that perhaps this pointed to a difference of direction, (the returning being to Egypt,) "for the place where the king was" with letters *from* (not *to*) the officials mentioned; but the matter is one on which only an Egyptologist can decide. In any case, if the journal proves the presence of the king in Syria, it does nothing to prove a campaign of any sort, still less a personal campaign against Israel.

Böhl's<sup>1</sup> theory that the journal can be combined with the hymn, and so give a joint route for the campaign of Merneptah, outstrips the facts and leaves an extraordinary itinerary. As already pointed out, we do not know whether the order

<sup>1</sup> F. Böhl, *Kanaanäer und Hebräer*, 1911, pp. 77 f. (a very good and careful book).

in which the places are named is intended to be approximately geographical. If Yenoam is the place near Tyre, it is most certainly not. Böhl thinks the Pharaoh passed through the country of an Israel already established in its territorial possessions. The important fact that Pekanan, two miles from Hebron, is not yet Israelitish territory, and the lack of the place determinative in the mention of Israel, are fatal to his view.

Lastly, Breasted contends (pp. 258 f.) that "an invasion of Palestine by Merneptah is further evident from the epithet assumed by him among his titles: '*Binder of Gezer*,' which town he must have captured and punished after revolt, as indicated also in our Hymn of Victory. For the mention of a specific town, or even nation, in such an epithet, in a titular must refer to some definite occurrence." Yes, but the definite occurrence need not have been a *personal* campaign. Capture by one of his officers would be sufficient. On an examination of Breasted's evidence and contentions, I can only submit that they do nothing to date the defeat of Israel in the third year or to support the theory of a personal campaign of the Pharaoh in Palestine. The contrast between this portion of the hymn and the language of the earlier portion, which does relate to a personal campaign, is exceedingly marked. Compare, for instance, line 2, "King Merneptah, the Bull, lord of strength, who slays his foes, beautiful upon the field of victory, when his onset occurs"; lines 4 f., "He has penetrated the land of Temeh in his lifetime, and put eternal fear in the heart of the Meshwesh"; lines 9 f., "He has become a proverb for Libya," etc. The whole tone of the hymn militates against Breasted's hypothesis. Had the Pharaoh won victories in person, the references would be couched in a very different strain.

As to the date it is important to observe that the hymn bears that of the battle against the Libyans Epiphi 3=April 27, according to Petrie, or April 15, according to Breasted (History, 2d ed., p. 468), in the fifth year of Merneptah. The date of his accession is given by Petrie as 1234 B.C., by Breasted as 1225 B.C.

Egyptology, then, gives us the clearest data. At a time not later than April in the fifth year of King Merneptah, the immediate successor of the Pharaoh of the oppression, a non-territorial people of Israel is defeated so crushingly that the Egyptian peace in Palestine is securely established and the Israelitish menace removed. It may have been an Israelitish invasion, for the phrase "his seed is not" is elsewhere applied to invaders. Indeed, it is difficult to see how it can have been anything but an invasion, since Israel is not established in its known territory.

Now for the Biblical data. We have two accounts of this event, one in Numbers and the other in Deuteronomy, couched in very similar language — so similar that they appear to be the work of one and the same man — but supplementing each other. A careful examination of the phenomena of Numbers some years ago showed that on geographical, historical, chronological, and literary grounds the present arrangement of the text is impossible. That investigation appeared in the *BIBLIOTHECA SACRA* for April, 1909, and is reprinted on pages 114–138 of my "Essays in Pentateuchal Criticism." I cannot repeat it here, and I must content myself with saying: first, that its results are assumed in what follows; and, secondly, that nobody can form a just estimate of the immense strength of my position without studying that discussion carefully.

In the first month of the third year of the Exodus the



Israelites arrived at Kadesh-barnea. They negotiated with Edom for a passage, but were refused. Either before or during the negotiations with Edom, a campaign was actually waged in the Negeb, resulting in the defeat of the king of Arad, and spies were sent out to explore the country. From Num. xiii. 20 we learn that the mission of the spies took place at the time of the first ripe grapes, i.e. apparently about July. They were away for forty days. On hearing their report the people lost heart, and it became clear that success could not be expected until a new generation had grown up, and less difficult conditions could be found for an invasion. The order was therefore given to evacuate Kadesh and compass the land of Edom. But the people suddenly veered round and refused to obey. In defiance of the Divine command they embarked on a campaign of conquest. The result was disastrous. They were utterly routed and chased to Hormah, the scene of their former triumph.

The following are extracts from the Deuteronomy account:—

“So I spake unto you, and ye hearkened not; but ye rebelled against the commandment of the LORD, and were presumptuous, and went up into the mountain. And the Amorites which dwelt in that mountain, came out against you, and chased you, as bees do, and beat you down in Seir, even unto Hormah. . . . So ye abode in Kadesh many days. . . . Then we turned, and took our journey into the wilderness by the way to the Red Sea, as the LORD spake unto me; and we compassed mount Seir many days. . . . And the days in which we came from Kadesh-barnea, until we were come over the brook Zered, were thirty and eight years” (i. 43 ff.; ii. 1, 14).

Numbers makes it evident that the “Amorites” (a generic term) were in fact Amalekites and Canaanites. It will be remembered that Amalek had been defeated by Israel at Rephidim, but only after a hard-fought battle, the issue of

which was long in suspense (Ex. xvii.). It now had its revenge.

Now observe how precisely all this fits in with the Egyptian account. We learn of a defeat in the south of Palestine of an invading non-territorial Israel in the third year of the Exodus under a successor of the Pharaoh of the oppression by vassals of the Pharaoh, so crushing that the Egyptian peace in Palestine is securely established and the Israelitish menace removed for thirty-eight years. And even then Israel had to invade from a totally different direction. It exactly tallies with the Israel stele, though not with everything that modern scholars have read into that inscription. There cannot possibly have been two defeats of a non-territorial Israel in Palestine during the early years of the successor of the Pharaoh of the oppression, each leading to the complete establishment of the *pax Ægyptia* in Canaan, just as there cannot have been two buildings of Pithom and Raamses. Nor is the narrative of a defeat which never took place invented by any nation. Here too the testimony on both sides is as irrefragable as in the case of the Egyptian bondage.

But we can go further. We have seen that the stele is dated in April in the fifth year of the Pharaoh's reign. Now in Egypt a successor to the throne "began to number his years from the death of his predecessor" (Breasted, *Ancient Records*, vol. i. p. 32). Therefore Merneptah had been on the throne for more than four years and less than five in the April when he won his great victory over the Libyans, and the defeat of Israel must have preceded that. We have seen that that event took place in the autumn of the third year of the Exodus. Allowing for this, a minimum of three years must have elapsed between the Exodus (which occurred about April) and the victory over the Libyans. Therefore

the year of the Exodus is whittled down to the first or the second of Merneptah.

Here we must turn again to the Biblical record. The Exodus was preceded by the plagues. The narrative of these contains valuable chronological indications. "The plagues are in the order of usual seasonal troubles in Egypt, from the red unwholesome Nile in June, through the frogs, insects, hail and rain, locusts, and sandstorms in March. The death of the firstborn was in April at the Passover" (Petrie in the International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia,<sup>1</sup> p. 911). Kyle at page 2404 of the same work puts the first plague in May. This carries us back to the May or June *before* the Exodus in April. Thus if the Exodus occurred in the *first* year of Merneptah, his accession must have taken place at some time between a date in April and May, or June, for the Libyan victory was in April, and he had not then completed his fifth year. This allows much too short a period for the events narrated or implied between Ex. ii. 23 and Ex. vii. First, the news of the death of Rameses had to reach Moses. Then he had to experience the episode of the burning bush, make his farewells, and accomplish his journey. The debates with Pharaoh, and more especially the consequent changes in the arrangements for making bricks (Ex. v.), also require some length of time. Hence the first year of Merneptah is an impossible date, and that leaves us with the second year as the only one that will fit all the facts. The Exodus from Egypt took place on the fifteenth day of the month of Abib in the second year of Pharaoh Merneptah. If and when additional information comes to hand giving us the exact date of Merneptah's accession, we shall be able to fix the year B.C. At present we must be content with knowing that, on the basis

<sup>1</sup> Hereafter I cite this as ISBE.

of Petrie's and Breasted's dates, it cannot have been before 1233 or after 1223 B.C. When we know the precise year B.C., astronomy should be able to fix the exact dates of the new moons, and so we shall be able to ascertain on what day the fifteenth of Abib fell in that year. Truly a marvelous result!

Even this is not the end of the exact coincidences. Petrie in his most recent utterance on the subject says: "The historical limit is that the Egyptians were incessantly raiding Palestine down to 1194 B.C., and then abandoned it till the invasion of Shishak" (ISBE, p. 911).<sup>1</sup> That is precisely forty years from the accession of Merneptah in Petrie's date, and the expiration of the period of the wanderings exactly clears it. There is no record whatever of contact with Egyptian troops in Palestine during the period of Joshua or the Judges. That is because none took place. On the other hand, it is now obvious that the country had been weakened by the Egyptian campaign, and that this probably facilitated the Israelite conquest under Joshua.<sup>2</sup> We shall further see that a period of 430 years before the second year of Merneptah brings us to the right time for Joseph.

Such are the coincidences of truth and of nothing else known to the human mind. Consider once more the long chain extending from Joseph to the death of Moses, a period

<sup>1</sup> This presumably replaces Petrie's earlier dating, which I therefore pass over for the purpose of the discussion.

<sup>2</sup> It may also be noted that the Exodus explains a fact which appears from an interesting document of the eighth year of Merneptah, viz. that there was then room in Goshen for Edomite Bedouin (Shasu). "We have finished passing the tribes of the Shasu of Edom through the Fortress of Merneptah-Hotephirma (Life, Prosperity, Health to him) in Theku (? Succoth) to the pools of Pitom, of Merneptah-Hotephirma in Theku, in order to sustain them and their herds in the domain of Pharaoh (Life, Prosperity, Health to him), the good sun of every land" (Breasted, *Ancient Records*, vol. iii. p. 273).

of 470 years. Remember that it begins in strongly vouched coincidences between the Hyksos period, the Raamses excavation, and the 430 years, and that the history of Joseph is minutely true to Egyptian life in all the little touches. Then recall the impossibility of duplicating the building of Pithom and Raamses as store cities under one and the same Pharaoh, the length of his reign, the fact that both the Hebrew and the Egyptian records testify to the defeat of a non-territorial Israel in the early years of his successor, giving Canaan durable security from Israelitish invasion, the coincidence of the forty years with the last of the Egyptian raids, the harmony with Egyptian and desert conditions revealed by the narrative of Exodus-Numbers,<sup>1</sup> the unerring certainty with which all our data point to one year and one year only, the ease with which we can trace the history of Israel from season to season till the departure from Kadesh-barnea. Above all do not forget that if the facts come from the Bible on the one side they come from a multitude of different though consentient witnesses on the other, covering documentary and monumental sources, and the testimony of excavations. If that be not historic truth there is no such thing.

It may be added that only a contemporary written narrative could be so true and exact in all particulars in addition to being so vivid as the main stock of the first four books of the Pentateuch. Subject to the large deductions made by textual criticism they must be Mosaic.

Other theories have been advocated — an earlier date, a later date, a divided Israel. We must just glance at the alleged facts on which reliance is placed by those who support them. I quote Boyd's valuable article on "Jacob":—

"(a) In Babylonian documents of the period of the Patriarchs,

<sup>1</sup> Compare *The Origin of the Pentateuch*, pp. 128 f.



there occur such personal names as Ja-ku-bi, Ja-ku-ub-ilu (the former doubtless an abbreviation of the latter), and Aq-bu-û (cf. Aq-bi-a-chu, according to Hilprecht a syncopated form for A-qu(?)-bu(-û), like Aq-bi-ilî alongside of A-qa-bi-ilî; all of which may be associated with the same root קבע, *āqabh*, as appears in Jacob (see H. Ranke, *Early Babylonian Personal Names*, 1905, with annotations by Professor Hilprecht as editor, esp. pp. 67, 113, 98 and 4). (b) In the list of places in Palestine conquered by the Pharaoh Thutmose III appears a certain J'qb'r, which in Egyptian characters represents the Semitic letters יקבאל, *ya'āqōbh-'ēl*, and which therefore seems to show that in the earlier half of the 15th century B.C. (so Petrie, Breasted) there was a place (not a tribe; see W. M. Müller, *Asien und Europa*, 162 ff.) in central Palestine that bore a name in some way connected with 'Jacob.' Moreover, a Pharaoh of the Hyksos period bears a name that looks like *ya'āqōbh-'ēl* (Spiegelberg, *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*, vii. 130)" (ISBE, p. 1549).

These facts show that Jacob(-el) was a not uncommon name in the second millennium B.C. They prove absolutely nothing as to the history of Israel.

Then the name Y-sh-p'-r (Yashep'era) has been found as a place name in an Egyptian list. Lehmann-Haupt (Israel, 1911, p. 36) has shown that this corresponds to a Semitic Yashub-el, not to Yoseph-el, which would require an Egyptian Y-w-s-p'-r. In other words, the significant part of the word has *one letter* (y), and no more, in common with Joseph, which it was supposed to represent. That, then, also proves nothing.

Lastly, it has been claimed that a land Asher has been found corresponding generally to the later territory of that tribe. B. D. Eerdmans (*Vorgeschichte*, 1908, pp. 66 f.) has shown convincingly that the name of the only known inhabitant of this land is most certainly not Semitic. In other words, the name of the land is a transliteration from some non-Semitic language, *not from Hebrew at all*. Eerdmans further argues that the Egyptian transliteration does not in fact

correspond to the name Asher, and disputes the geographical location.

That is all that can be advanced from archæological materials for a non-Egyptian Israel during the period of the sojourn in Egypt. It amounts to precisely nothing. It is, however, necessary to say something of the Hebrews, the Habiri and the Apuriu. In Old Testament usage, Hebrew is a wider expression than Israelite. That is shown by the genealogies of Eber (Gen. x. 24 ff.; xi. 16 ff.). In narrative it is used of Israelites *only when in relation to a non-Hebrew race* (Egyptians, Philistines, and Jonah's sailors). It is also applied to Abram in the Massoretic text of Gen. xiv. 13, but d and the Ethiopic omit the expression, and the Ethiopic represents a pre-Hexaplar text. All Israelites were Hebrews, but not all Hebrews were Israelites; just as all Englishmen are British, but not all the British are Englishmen.

It has been contended that certain names found in the archæological materials are identical with Hebrews. Some two centuries before the date of the entry into Palestine we find from the Amarna letters that some people called Habiri were fighting there, and recently it has been shown that these were practically identical with the Sagaz (J. M. P. Smith, *Am. Jour. of Sem. Lang.*, Jan. 1916, vol. xxxii. p. 85; cp. Böhl, *Kanaanäer*, pp. 87 ff.).

Now in our present field we have to deal with three classes of identifications: identifications that are so certain that no philologist can question them (e.g. Pithom and the Israel of the stele); identifications about which the philologists disagree; and identifications which no philologist could be found to propose. Here we have to do with one identification of the second class and one of the third. As it is well to argue from the certain to the uncertain, I begin with the latter.

No philologist has been found to suggest that Sagaz, if a proper name,<sup>1</sup> can be identified with any Old Testament name whatever—to say nothing of Eber or any member of his family. Yet if the Sagaz were an important *Hebrew* tribe, well known to the Israelites, who, *ex hypothesi*, were their near kinsmen living in close contact with them and speaking the same language, how comes it that the Sagaz were not “begotten” by Eber or any of his descendants? If, on the other hand, the word means “plunderers,” then it is not a Hebrew word, and they are gratuitously called by a non-Hebrew name.

Then we come to the word Habiri itself, on which philologists differ (see, e.g., Eerdmans, *Vorgeschichte*, pp. 64 f., and Böhl, *Kanaanäer*, pp. 83–96). Böhl in his careful discussion concludes that so far as philology is concerned the word may correspond to a Hebrew עברי or חברי (Hebrew) or עפר or חפר. That will do for a beginning, but it is not all, for the initial letter is sometimes represented by א or ה (Böhl, p. 84), so that we have at least four more possibilities, making a total of *eight*. That, of course, further assumes that all vowels are the same, for the vowels in all the proposed equivalents are different, so that we get a vista of further combinations to an almost unlimited extent. In fact, the only certain point of contact between Habiri and Hebrew is the letter *r*!

Again, these transliterations owe any value they may be deemed to possess to one great assumption—that the Habiri were in fact a Hebrew people, so that their name in cuneiform is a transliteration from Hebrew. If they were a peo-

<sup>1</sup>According to unpublished information cited at page 85 of Smith's article, the word means “plunderers”—a curious designation for a people in the invocation of its gods in a solemn treaty (cp. Eerdmans, *Vorgeschichte*, p. 62).

ple of any other language (as the name or word *sagaz* seems to show), the whole thing goes, for a transliteration from the a language when transliterated again from cuneiform into Hebrew might resemble any number of Hebrew words without in fact having the slightest connection with any one of them. The only material facts we know about the Habiri are: (1) that they were practically identical with the Sagaz (who are called by a non-Hebrew term), (2) that their gods were not Hebrew gods, and (3) that in the jurat of a treaty their gods are invoked at the end of a group of Hittite gods (Böhl, p. 87). When we add the fact that the Israelites were in Egypt at the time to which the Amarna tablets relate and did not invade Palestine until nearly two centuries later, and the fact (well known to readers of Egyptian history and the Book of Judges) that the Palestine of the second millennium B.C. was the scene of countless wars and invasions, we see that there is not a shadow of a case for the Habiri-Hebrew theory. Professor Smith gives us the verdict of philologists as follows: "The evidence for identifying the Habiri with the Hebrews need not be restated. It is so strong as to have convinced most workers in this field" (p. 85). I can only say that for a lawyer the only possible finding is that there is *no* evidence. History is not to be written by gambling in consonants and vowels.

It is suggested that there is confirmation of the theory from the recent excavation of Jericho. The newest account (that of Cobern, ISBE, p. 2230) shows that this is not so. A century or more *before* the probable date of the Habiri campaign, "somewhere near the 15th century, the old fortifications were seriously damaged, but equally powerful ones replaced them. The German experts all believed that a break in the city's history was clearly shown about the time when,

according to the pottery, Israel ought to have captured the city, and it was confidently said that the distinctively Canaanish pottery ceased completely and permanently at this point; but further research has shown that at least a portion of the old town had a practically continuous existence." According to the German experts, "Israel ought to have captured the city" in the Habiri period (Sellin and Wätzinger, *Jericho*, 1913, p. 181), and their judgment was influenced by the theory. It is, however, evident from Cobern's account that the excavations do *not* confirm it.

The Egyptian monuments have introduced us to some people called 'Apriew, Eerdmans (*Vorgeschichte*, pp. 52 ff.) has argued for their identification with Hebrews. This is connected with his theory that the Israelites did not enter Egypt till after Merneptah. As they are mentioned under Rameses II. (i.e. before on his theory Israel had entered Egypt), Rameses III., and Rameses IV. (i.e. after Merneptah), it is clear that they cannot be the Israelites. Böhl (pp. 73-83) has an excellent discussion. The identification is philologically possible, but not probable (p. 76). I agree with Böhl and Kittel (*Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, 2d ed., vol. i. [1912] pp. 453-455) in thinking that these people *may* have been Hebrews, but I regard it as most unlikely. In any case the possibility does not touch the question of Israel.

That is all. Compare this with the correspondence between Egyptian and Hebrew records over a period of 470 years, and the difference is sufficiently marked.

We can now consider the other theories.<sup>1</sup>

It is said that the Exodus was much earlier than the time of Merneptah. This is impossible for the following reasons:—

<sup>1</sup>A good recent account of them is given by J. M. P. Smith, *AJSL*, vol. xxxii. pp. 81 ff.



- (a) Correspondence of Joseph with the Hyksos period.
- (b) The building of Pithom and Raamses.
- (c) The Israel stele, which tells of the defeat of a non-territorial Israel in circumstances that cannot be duplicated.
- (d) The silence of the Book of Judges as to any Egyptian invasion during the period it covers.

Add to this that there is not a particle of archæological evidence to support the theory.

Eerdmans (*Vorgeschichte*, pp. 74 f.) places the entry into Egypt *after* the time of Merneptah. This is impossible for each and all of the following reasons:—

- (a) and (b) as above.
- (c) The whole Book of Genesis is repugnant to the theory of an Israel that would comply with the requirements of the Israel stele in times preceding the Egyptian bondage.
- (d) The later chronology is impossible, for he dates the Exodus at *circa* 1130 B.C., and David at *circa* 1000 B.C. Deducting the forty years of the wanderings, we have ninety years for the whole period from the entry into Palestine to David.

Add to this that there is not a particle of evidence for the theory of a divided Israel, that the identification of the 'Apriew with the Hebrews is extremely doubtful, and that there were 'Apriew in Egypt before (according to Eerdmans) Israel entered.

Then there is the theory of a divided Israel. For this there is not a particle of evidence, and it is contradicted by the whole Pentateuchal record.

In Ex. xii. 40 we read: "And the sojourn of the children of Israel which they sojourned in Egypt was 430 years." The LXX and Samaritan make it a sojourning in Canaan and Egypt. This should be rejected on textual grounds; for

(1) Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were *not* "children of Israel," and (2) the LXX and the Samaritan differ as to the position of the insertion, thus marking it as a gloss. But now we have an independent test. The right reading added to the date of the Exodus will give the date B.C. of Joseph. The difference in the readings makes a difference of 215 years in the date, for that is the interval given by the schematic chronology of Genesis between the call of Abraham and the descent into Egypt. Add 215—the Samaritan and Greek period—to the date of the Exodus, and whether we accept Petrie's or Breasted's date for Merneptah, we come near the accession of Amenhotep II. (Breasted 1448–1420, Petrie 1449–1423 B.C., the date of accession being astronomically fixed). That is called by Breasted (History, 2d ed., p. 322) "the full noontide" of "the imperial age," and is impossible for Joseph. But add 430 and we get *circa* 1660, i.e. the close of the Hyksos period, which has always been accepted as the right time for Joseph. We have already seen how this agrees with the results of the excavation of Raamses.

It remains to consider the date of Abraham and Gen. xv. The Amraphel of Gen. xiv. has been identified with Hammurabi, but there are great difficulties in the way (ISBE, s.v. "Amraphel"),<sup>1</sup> and the identification seems very doubtful. Add to this that L. W. King (History of Babylon, 1915) concludes, on the basis of information in the course of publication, that Hammurabi's date is 2123–2081 B.C. If this be correct,—and it must be remembered that there have been

<sup>1</sup> The discussion by C. H. W. Johns, Relations between the Laws of Babylonia, 1914, pp. 17–20, is quite untrustworthy. He confuses Warad-Sin with Rim-Sin (see Pinches in ISBE, s.v.v. "Eri-Aku," "Elam"; also King, History of Babylon, p. 89). On the other hand, according to the newest information, Warad-Sin and Hammurabi did not reign contemporaneously.

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very many dates for this famous king, ranging from 2394–2339 to 1772–1717 B.C. (King, *Chronicles concerning Early Babylonian Kings*, 1907, vol. i. p. 87), — the identification is out of the question.

For myself I cannot doubt that the reign of Amraphel should be assigned to the gap between the end of the reign of Samsu-ditana, the last king of the first Babylonian dynasty (1926 B.C.), and the beginning of the reign of Gandash, the first king of the third Babylonian dynasty (1760 B.C. — the dates being King's). The so-called second dynasty consists of kings of the sea country, some of whom were contemporaneous with some of the rulers of the first dynasty. It is certain that some of them never reigned in Babylon, and it is not certain that any of them ever did. "We have as yet no direct evidence of their occupation of Babylon" (King, *History*, p. 211). And of the whole period the same historian says: "The only fact of which we are certain is the continued succession of the sea-country kings" (p. 212). It is to this period that the Biblical data clearly assign Amraphel and his contemporaries. I venture to predict that if and when we obtain full information as to this period, the truth will be found to fit the Biblical data a great deal better than the Hammurabi-Amraphel identification ever did.

For the moment, however, we have no external information as to Abraham's date, and must hope for archaeological finds. It is well known that the chronology of the Massoretic Genesis is a scheme one element of which is to give two thirds of 4000 years, i.e. 2666, for the period from the Creation to the Exodus. Now the 430 of Ex. xii. 40 is not a multiple of 40 or a round number, and the chronological scheme is partly based on it. Hence I believe it to be genuine, and this brings us to Gen. xv.

The material words are as follows: "Know that thy seed shall be a sojourner in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve four hundred years [ver. 13] . . . and in the fourth generation they shall come hither again" (ver. 16). This makes nonsense. The fourth generation cannot refer to the sojourn in Egypt; because (1) a generation is not and never was 100 years, and (2) even if it were, the return did not take place till after 470 years; and after what we have learnt, we are entitled to expect minute accuracy from the true text — at any rate in matters historical. In the days when this chapter made sense, the fourth generation must have referred to something else. That can only be the beginning of the oppression, i.e. (probably) the accession of Rameses II., some 108 years before the entry into Canaan; and it will be seen that this gives a reasonable and possible time for a generation. The conquest began some 108 years after the rise of the new king who knew not Joseph (Ex. i. 8), i.e. of Rameses II., for there is no foundation for the suggestion that the reference is to a dynasty. Allowing twenty-five years for a generation, the men of the fourth generation born in the first years of the oppression would be in their thirties when the conquest began. That allowance is roughly accurate, though it may err some three or four years on the one side or the other. It may be noticed that there is a margin for such error in the age of the fourth generation. The "four hundred years" present no difficulty to the textual critic, for he knows that four hundred may be nothing more than a scribe's misreading of forty (see *Essays in Pent. Crit.*, pp. 155–169). In the old Hebrew writing there was no division of words and no distinction between final letters and others. Further, abbreviations were common, the letter *m* (the initial letter of the word for hundred) being a current abbrev-

viation for it. Forty differs from four only by the addition of this letter *m*. Hence the misreading. In the Old Testament forty is in common use not as an arithmetical expression, but as a vague statement of number. Thus we should be giving the meaning most correctly by a paraphrase like "they shall be slaves for a period of years, and in the fourth generation they shall return." The passing over of the period of the free sojourn in Egypt in verse 13 is entirely characteristic of Hebrew methods of expression. So we see how the schematic chronology arrived at 215 years as the period from the call of Abraham to the entering into Egypt. If the fourth generation from Jacob went out after 430 years, then surely the second generation from Abraham must have gone in after 215 years. That is the underlying thought. We are dealing not with historical chronology but with editorial reasoning from texts. For these reasons I am of opinion that the 430 years and the fourth generation are both strictly historical. Biblical students should always remember that on the day when the full truth is revealed, there can be no irreconcilable discrepancies, no harmonistic interpretations, and no forced exegesis. Truth is always consistent.

The foregoing investigations give *circa* 1700 B.C. for the birth of Joseph; and, in view of the other indications, we may give *circa* 1800 B.C. as, roughly, the year of Abraham's entry into Canaan. It will be remembered that Isaac was not born until late, that his marriage in turn was for long unfruitful (Gen. xxv. 21), that Jacob was of marriageable age when he went to Aram-naharaim, that he then served seven years, and that Joseph was not born till late in his married life. No greater certainty is at present obtainable.

A few words must be said on the chronology from the Exodus to the building of the Temple. In Judges xi. 25 f., the



Massoretic text reads: "Did he have any dispute with Israel, or did he at all fight with them? When Israel abode in Heshbon . . . *three hundred years; and why did you not relieve at that time?*" Recent commentators have followed Moore in reading: "Did he have any dispute with Israel, or did he at all fight with them when Israel abode in Heshbon," etc. "And why did you not," etc., thus treating three hundred years as a gloss based on the schematic chronology of the book. If the two readings be compared, there can be no reasonable doubt that Moore is right.

As to the schematic chronology itself, I refer to the discussion in Moore's "Judges" as proving beyond all doubt that it is not historical. This is not the time to make a fresh attempt at solving its problems, because the publication of the larger Cambridge Septuagint may give us fresh material. There is no reference in the book to any Egyptian invasion, and this accords with the facts. There is not enough historical material to fill anything like the period assigned by the chronology. Half a dozen figures stand out—Barak and Deborah, Gideon, Abimelech, Jephthah, and Samson. Even with the assistance of Othniel, Caleb's younger contemporary, Ehud, and the minor judges, these cannot sum up the history of four centuries. Nor are the recurrent forties and twenties and the one eighty time reckonings. Forty is rarely arithmetical in the Old Testament.

Lastly, there is 1 Kings vi. 1. According to the Hebrew 480 years, according to the LXX 440, elapsed from the Exodus to the building of the Temple. Both are multiples of forty, and due to schematic chronologers.

That completes our brief survey. It is not at present possible to date the periods of the patriarchs and the judges in

the same way as the long stretch of time from Joseph to the death of Moses, but it is reasonable to hope that the science which in the past has taught us so much and has so brilliantly confirmed the Biblical narrative may in the future extend its revelations in full measure to the earlier and later ages.

In conclusion I would express my deep indebtedness to those whose efforts have rendered this investigation possible, — primarily, of course to Professor Flinders Petrie, who in the triple rôle of discoverer of the Israel stele, excavator of Raamses, and historian of Egypt has conferred such unique benefits on all lovers of the Bible, and then to Professors Naville, Breasted, Böhl, and Eerdmans, whose work has done so much to lighten and inform my labors.











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Wiener, Harold M

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